



www.travellerkate.com | kate@capturedtravel.com

FLOATING AT
4500 FEET IN
THE AIR, KATE
WEBSTER FINDS
WARMTH IN
THE SUNSHINE
AND CALM IN
THE STILLNESS
OVER THE
GOLD COAST
ON A HOT
AIR BALLOON
FLIGHT.



THE AIR UP THERE

I don't mind early mornings but in winter it certainly is hard to get motivated to climb out of bed at 4:00am in the dark and brave the cold. When you have somewhere to go though, that task is made a little easier.

CHILLY WINTER HOT AIR

This chilly winter morning I left the coastline at Mermaid Beach and headed inland towards the Scenic Rim with Hot Air Gold Coast to climb into a hot air balloon and take in the sights of the Gold Coast from above.

Stood in the field of a farm, the morning is still, dark and the chill is lifting from the wet ground. My attention quickly turns to the bursts of flames as the spectacular balloon inflation begins. Once the balloon is fully inflated, I climbed into the basket which is surprisingly large. These hot air balloons can take up to 20 passengers. Not the intimate four people sized basket I had imagined.

SMOOTH LIFT OFF

Without a sound we began to float up, up and away. Everything happened so smoothly. The air was calm and silent, only broken by the blasts of flames that continued to fill the balloon with hot air and send us higher. As we floated to around 4000 feet, the sun continued to rise over the rolling hills of the majestic Gold Coast hinterland.

It was here that I could take in sweeping views of Tamborine Mountain, Lamington National Park and, to the east, see the shimmering tall towers of the Gold Coast

skyline. The stillness was deceiving as we were obviously moving on the air current, but the peace and quiet was as beautiful as the scenery.

AWAKENING WORLD

I let my thoughts drift off as I watch the world wake up below me. Cows moved around paddocks; cars began their morning journeys. It was becoming a hive of activity below. I wondered if they would look up and notice me in the balloon floating by.

The landing was anticipated to be slightly bumpy as the basket drifted across the grassed field, but even that was smooth and uneventful. It was a perfect landing. The perfect day for it too with the weather showing nothing but clear skies. I am told the Gold Coast is a great place for a hot air balloon ride as the stable and reliable weather conditions means many more flying days per year.

A GROWING APPETITE

With my feet back on the ground, and after assisting in packing up the balloon, it was off to have a champagne breakfast in the gracious ambiance of O'Reilly's Vineyard's historic Grand Homestead. There is something about the fresh air out in the Gold Coast hinterland that makes you work up an appetite.

I perched myself next to the small flowing creek at the back of the property and devoured my breakfast surrounded by the magical part of the valley and think to myself that exploring my own back yard isn't that bad after all. ❖

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